REVOLUTIONARY WOMEN IN HISTORY

WOMEN YOU SHOULD KNOW & DISCUSSIONS ON ANTI-PATRIARCHAL ORGANIZING

By: All Peoples Fighting Oppression

In Collaboration with: very láo.d, & @bodythudz_artisanworks

Disclaimer

This zine sheds light on some of the many women who played important roles in various revolutionary movements across the world. Education is an important pillar in revolutionary work, yet historical writing tends to center the contributions of men. We invite you to learn about the contributions and lives of these women. This zine does not intend to deify or idolize any revolutionary woman, but instead to look at their experiences as strategies to organize for change. Consider what you can learn from them as you participate in revolutionary work today.

Remember: your work only begins with education, follow through with action.

Usage of the word “Women”

As a colonial language, English has its limitations that flattens nuances and fluidity, categorizes, and has binaries.

During the planning of this Zine, it became apparent that we fall short on an inclusive term that does not centre cisgender men. We could not find a single term that includes:

- (cis-gendered) women
- trans women
- trans men
- 2-spirit
- non binary-people
- femmes, and
- queers

So, for a lack of a better word, we will be using “women” when discussing patriarchal effects. We turn the question of the inclusivity, or lack of, for the word “women” to the reader and ask you to contribute your thoughts. Is there a better term that can be used in English or do you even see the need for one?

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On Anti-Patriarchal Organizing

What is Patriarchy?

European colonial societies were founded on the concept of patriarchy. Simply put **patriarchy** is a system of beliefs and practices that centres and privileges cis-gendered, straight men. As Bell Hooks defines it, patriarchy is a "system that insists that males are inherently...superior to everything and everyone deemed weak...and to maintain that dominance [they must enforce] various forms of psychological terrorism and violence". In European societies, this was manifested in terms of land ownership, inheritance, and political and social power. Many pre-colonial societies in the global south also practiced patriarchy, but it would have varied from culture to culture.

Banner from APFO's Pan-African Contingent at the PYM Tkaronto rally on October 5, 2025

Modern-day political, economic, and social institutions still reflect their patriarchal origins. The end result is that those who do not identify as men — women, non-binary, two-spirited and trans people — are harmed and restricted from living full lives. Patriarchy is intertwined with racial capitalism, resource extraction, settler colonialism, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. With colonization came the violent domination of land, plants, animals, and anyone who is not a cis-gendered man.

On Anti-Patriarchal Organizing

The Origins of Patriarchy in Northern Turtle Island

There were many Indigenous matriarchal societies across different clans on Northern Turtle Island (Kkkanada).

Haudenosaunee Matriarchy
(Photograohed by Drennan, Wm. A., 1914)

Illustration of the Haudenosaunee
(Humankind Encyclopedia Website)

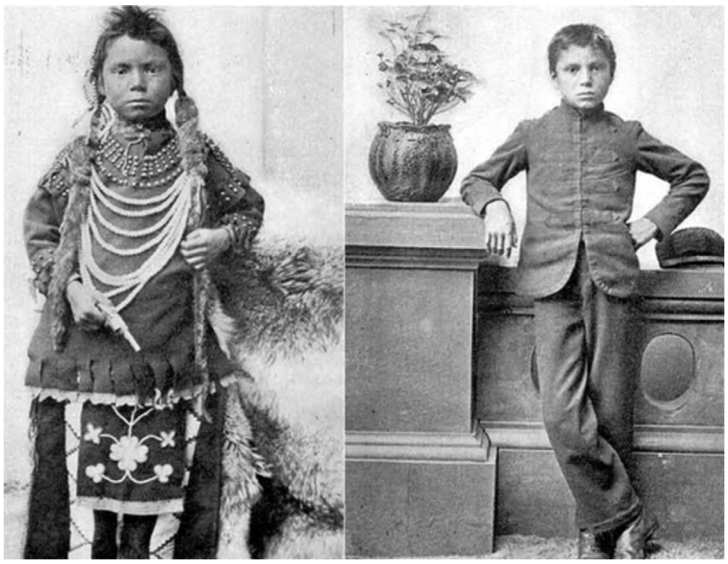
Haudenosaunee's matriarchal and matrilineal structures

- The Haudenosaunee League's constitution wrote a broad range of powers embedded to women.
- Children belonged to the entire community and men did not rule their families.
- The Haudenosaunee's religion was naturally matriarchal.
- As foragers, they worshipped Mother Nature for the livelihood she provides.

Despite matriarchs and Haudenosaunee priests warring for rule of clans and the confederacy, the oppressive patriarchy was not introduced until colonialism arrived. When French Europeans settled on Northern Turtle Island in 1608, these settler colonial structures brought:

- Negotiations that were only conducted between settlers and Indigenous males.
- Forced conversion to Christianity with the accompanying belief that the man is appointed by God to rule the Earth.
- Acceptance of western notions of the family where men dominate the entire community.
- Capitalistic agricultural societies; genetically modifying agricultural products for capital gain, consuming and farming livestock without care for the land or beings.

Indigenous children at St. Mary's Residential School.



Department of Indian Affairs. Thomas Moore before and after Tuition at Regina Indian Industrial School. 1897. (Saskatchewan Archives Board.)

Capitalism, interconnected with colonialism and patriarchy, has wreaked havoc all over the world. It is a system sustained by brutal violence with a goal of amassing wealth for a small global elite.

On Anti-Patriarchal Organizing

Matriarchal Societies

While not romanticizing pre-colonial continents, we must remember them to imagine a world without the exploitative system of capitalism and neocolonialism.

Within the imperial core, it is imperative that we recognize there are alternatives to a society structured around patriarchy. In the present day, matriarchal societies exist and function effectively.

For instance, we can find both matriarchal and matrilineal societies in Vietnam within the Cham Matriarchy where both men and women bear important responsibilities. Cham women:

- organize finances
- supervise religious ceremonies
- resolve conflicts
- make decisions as a collective
- make pottery, a traditional craft
- educate children in ancestral practices
- inherit land and family property

Pottery making in Ninh Thuan
(Photo: baoninhthuan.com.vn)

Cham men handle the labour intensive work such as farm work, leading religious rituals and writing the prayers. The Cham people have a saying which reflects their respect for men. “Although wives are called the household chiefs, husbands have the right to make community decisions.”

On Anti-Patriarchal Organizing

Negative Impacts of Patriarchy Within Organizing Spaces

The most marginalized people are still oppressed throughout decades of leftist social and political organizing. Among activists, a great deal of those doing the organizing work are femmes and queer people, but their work often goes unrecognized.

REFLECT HERE

Think About It!
Why would those that benefit from the patriarchy be reluctant or slow to analyze their own misogyny while advocating for dismantling of oppressive systems?

When we look at great male leaders in leftist movements- Che Guevara, Karl Marx, Mao Zedong- would it be normal to imagine them having been killed and sexually assaulted by their own "comrades" before they even reached their potential? Even after death, revolutionary women are often immortalized for their roles in relation to men rather than for their own personhood and courage.

Remembering Oluwatoyin "Toyin" Salau

August 27, 2000 - June 13, 2020

Protest in front of the Tallahassee Police Department May 30, 2020 (Hali Tauxe/ Tallahassee Democrat)

Photographed by Alina Amador

Illustration of Oluwatoyin, 2025 (@bodythudz_artisanworks)

Oluwatoyin was a great speaker, comrade, and compassionate woman. In 2020, at the age of 19, she became well known by the international community after her powerful speech in the BLM movement went viral. She advocated for the inclusion of trans voices in BLM, spending her final days defending black trans lives. During this time, she was living in a church, fleeing abuse from her family, and tweeted about sexual assault she experienced. A few days after her speech went viral, she was reported missing and later found dead under a pile of leaves after being kidnapped and raped by Aaron Glee, a 49 year old black man. He was sentenced to life in prison on September 22, 2023. Oluwatoyin's circumstances are shattering but not uncommon.

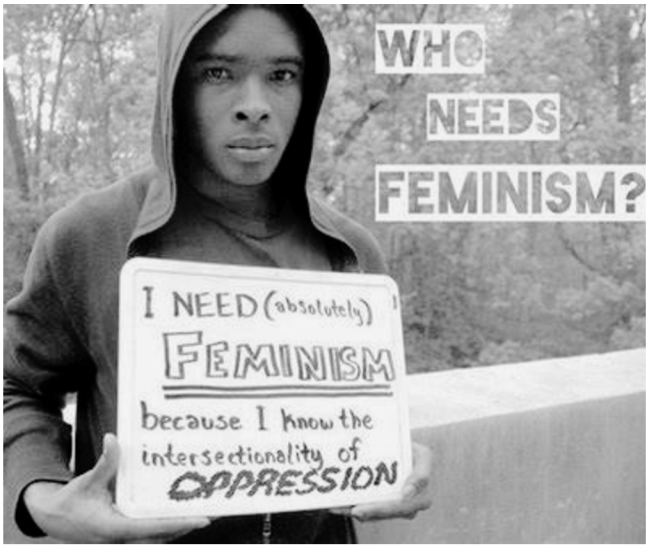
Unless we all make a true effort to be anti-patriarchal in our organizing, the patriarchy will still stop women revolutionaries from reaching their potential due to silencing them, belittling them, and even through rape and murder.

On Anti-Patriarchal Organizing

Why must we be anti-patriarchal in our organizing?

Women fight for the rights of their own oppressors and yet they have to beg for their voices to be centred and continuously prove their worth. In short, being anti-patriarchal in our organizing is a necessity if we sincerely care about creating a free world for everyone and giving land back.

Women's Strike for Equality, August 26, 1970. Photograph by Eugene Gordon, PR 248. New-York Historical Society



Who Needs Feminism? is a social media photo campaign started by students at Duke University in 2012.

Patriarchy is an institution that has completely infiltrated all faiths, educational curricula, and every facet of society today, yet none of that changes the reality that it is an institution of oppression against women identifying people so any process designed to liberate humanity must take an anti-patriarchal position." - A Guide for Organizing Defense against White Supremacists, by Ahjamu Umi, 2021

The Vietnamese Resistance Movement

As countries in the Global South began to shed their colonial chains after WWII, a shared call for resistance to imperial oppression began to spread. Cold War actors - the US and the Soviet Union- began jockeying for influence over these newly independent nations to gain access to their natural resources. Resistance movements of the Global south demonstrated defiance against archaic and oppressive power systems and demanded justice and real independence.

MẶT TRẬN DÂN TỘC GIẢI PHÓNG MIỀN NAM VIỆT NAM:

The National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (NLF), was formally founded in 1960 as a major resistance front. "Vietcong" is a pejorative name created by the U.S.

Against Western Colonialism & Imperialism:

During the 1850s, France began its colonization of countries known today as Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. The French colony of "Indochina" would dissolve after a century of colonization in 1954, following France's surrender at the Battle of Điện Biên Phủ. Yet, Amerika's catastrophic domination over the Global South in the post WWII era postponed Vietnam's independence for another 21 years. Kháng chiến chống Mỹ (the "Resistance War Against the U.S.") defied Amerika's rule in the region.

1960 General Uprising:

The 1960 General Uprising in Bến Tre sparked a year of successive rebellions across rural South Vietnam, the Highlands, and Central Vietnam. This wave of resistance throughout the region led to the founding of the NLF later that year.

Women's Long Hair Army, Bến Tre Uprising. (Vietnamese Woman's Museum)

Illustration, "Đội quân tóc dài" ("Women's Long Hair Army") by Lê Dân. (Vietnamese Woman's Museum)

Nguyễn Thị Định

Biography

Young N.T.Định visiting her brother in Jail, giving her instructions. 2025. (@bodythudz_artisanworks)

Nguyễn Thị Định was born in Bến Tre on March 15, 1920. Her brother, Nguyễn Văn Chẩn, was an important figure in her long revolutionary career. She regularly visited him in jail after his arrest for his role in the growing anti-colonial movement.

Here, she witnessed raw colonial violence and injustice through the severe treatment of political prisoners. Her visits became clandestine meetings as her brother assigned tasks to complete on his behalf. She delivered letters, sold newspapers, and organized mutual-aid hubs in the village commune.

As a young revolutionary and woman, Nguyễn balanced her filial and activist duties by marrying her brother's comrade, Nguyễn Văn Bích, in 1938. She gave birth to their son Nguyễn Ngọc Minh in 1939. Their time together was cut short when her husband was arrested that same year. He was sent to Côn Đảo prison, a notorious colonial prison, and martyred. She was arrested shortly after in 1940. Despite these tragedies, she immediately went back to work upon her release and dedicated her life to seeking justice for her husband and her people. Nguyễn Thị Định would go on to lead many mass demonstrations, military campaigns and offensive operations in South Vietnam.

Nguyễn Thị Định Circa late 1940s-1950s. (Vietnamese Woman's Museum.)

A Summary of Her Contributions

Nguyễn Thị Định became the highest-ranking woman in the Vietnamese armed resistance, rising to Major General of the NLF. Her support and defense of the Vietnamese people was not limited to battlefields or war tables, she had always been on the ground, in community, and among the people:

- She oversaw the guerrilla training and command of the Đội quân tóc dài ("Long Hair Army") which was a group of ~5000 elderly women, nursing mothers, and teenagers that would be on the frontlines for the 1960 General Uprising in Bến Tre. The "Long Hair Army" would go on to inspire the creation of all-female combat units in South Vietnam.
- As chair to the Women's Union for the Liberation of South Vietnam, she helped connect the Southern Vietnamese Women's Liberation Movement to the Anti-Imperialist Movement organized by Vietnamese women in the North.
- She helped found the Vietnamese Women's Museum in 1995.

N.T.Định in her Major General Uniform

(Vietnamese Woman's Museum)

"Phó tổng tư lệnh quân Giải phóng miền Nam là cô Nguyễn Thị Định, cả thế giới chỉ có vị tướng quân gái như vậy. Thật vẻ vang cho cả miền Nam, cho cả dân tộc ta.."

Hồ Chí Minh, 1965.

In the whole world, only our country has such a female general like Nguyễn Thị Định. What a glorious thing for the South, for our people.

Reflections About Nguyễn Thị Định

It is important to connect to others in shared struggle. In the letters between Huey P. Newton, Minister of Defense for the Black Panther Party, and Nguyễn Thị Định, they recognized and supported each other's fights against U.S. imperial violence. Newton pledged to supply arms to the NFL if they had asked for support from the Panthers.

"In the spirit of revolutionary solidarity the Black Panther Party hereby offers to the National Liberation Front and Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam an undetermined number of troops to assist you in your fight against American Imperialism."
HUEY P. NEWTON,
Supreme Commander,
Minister of Defense, Black Panther Party
"With profound gratitude, we take notice of your enthusiastic proposal; when necessary, we shall call for your volunteers to assist us."
STORY CENTER PAGE
NGUYEN THI DINH,
Deputy Commander
of the SVN People's Liberation Armed Forces

Cover of The Black Panther , Vol. 4, No. 28. Jan 9th 1971.

Revolutionary and military history is too often associated with masculinity and the male sex._Nguyễn Thị Định's legacy subverts this idea. **The famous icon for the Vietnamese revolution is a female fighter inspired by Nguyễn Thị Định: she carries a firearm and has long black hair.**

Patriarchal values dominate Vietnamese culture and society. Nguyễn Thị Định is popularly remembered and propagated in the image of a put-together and enduring woman that dutifully served her family and her country. **These depictions disregard the violent, imperfect, and ugly lives of both freedom fighters and Vietnamese women.**

The Palestinian Resistance Movement

For over a century, the Palestinian land and people have remained steadfast in the face of colonial and imperial violence. In 1948, after the British Empire signed off Palestine to "Israel", the Nakba ("catastrophe" in Arabic) began: a period of massive genocide, expulsion, and loss.

> As Assata Shakur says, "where there is oppression, there will be resistance."

The Palestinian resistance movement (PRM) against Zionism continues to this day, as Israel continues to be financially, politically, and militarily backed by Western/U.S.-led supporters.

During 1947-1949:

Between 750,000 and one million, amounting to approximately 75% of all Palestinians, were expelled from their homeland and made refugees by Zionist militias and the new Israeli army during Israel's establishment (IMEU, 2023). During the Nakba, there was 70 massacres across Palestine, that killed over 15,000 Palestinians. (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics).

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)

Formed as a resistance movement after the Occupation of the West Bank (the Six Day War) in 1967. Sarah Irving notes they were influenced by:

- their own experiences as *fedayeen* (Arabic for freedom fighters, literally "those who sacrifice [themselves]")
- guerrilla writings of Che and Castro
- Frantz Fanon, who emphasized the power of armed, violent action to resurrect the pride and dignity of colonized peoples, and the need for those peoples—like Fanon's own adopted nation of Algeria—to take their struggle into their own hands.

Members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) drinking tea during a training excercise, circa 1969. Among the group are Leila Khaled (centre, left) and Salim Issawi (centre, right). (Popperfoto / Getty Images)

Leila Khaled holding a AK-47 rifle, wearing a keffiyeh. Taken after her first hijacking by Eddie Adams (1969) (AFP/Getty Images)

Khaled at the Beirut International Forum for Resistance, Anti-Imperialism, Solidarity between Peoples, and Alternatives, Taken by Sebastian Baryli in 2009.

Leila Khaled

An Icon of Armed Resistance

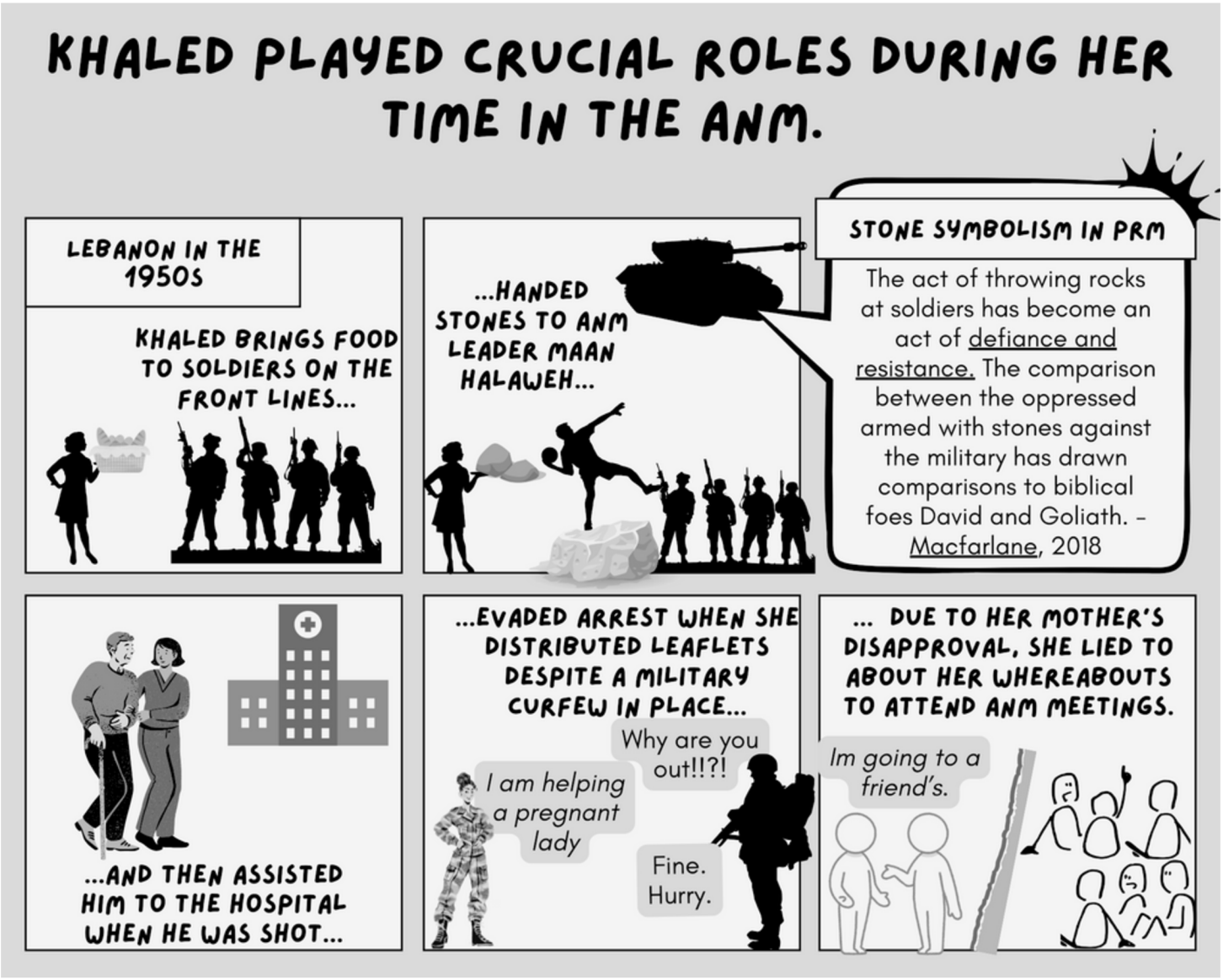
Pictured left to right: Khalida Jarrar, Mariam Abu Dagga, and Fatima Birnawi
Photography Credits left to right: (Haytham Shtayeh/Flash90), (REUTERS), (Screengrab)

Learning about Leila Khaled, Khalida Jarrar, Mariam Abu Dagga, and Fatima Birnawi can provide you great insight into the important roles that women played in the PRM. We will be highlighting Leila Khaled in this zine.

Biography:

Expelled from her home in Haifa by Israeli Zionists during the Nakba, Leila Khaled became a refugee child in Lebanon at the age of 4. Her family, being middle class, were privileged enough to live in a home as opposed to a tent. Her father owned a cafe and mother took care of 12 children, Khaled being the 6th. As young as 10 years old, Khaled was involved with the Arab National Movement (ANM), attending demonstrations in Lebanon with her classmates. Khaled would later become involved in the General Union of Palestinian Students at the American University of Beirut. She excelled in her activism work, becoming an important figure with the PFLP. When Khaled transitioned into the political arena of the PRM, she became a member of the Palestinian Nation Council and a leader in the General Union of Palestinian Women.

A Summary of Her Contributions


KHALED PLAYED CRUCIAL ROLES DURING HER TIME IN THE ANM.
LEBANON IN THE 1950S
KHALED BRINGS FOOD TO SOLDIERS ON THE FRONT LINES...
...HANDED STONES TO ANM LEADER MAAN HALAWEH...
STONE SYMBOLISM IN PRM
The act of throwing rocks at soldiers has become an act of defiance and resistance. The comparison between the oppressed armed with stones against the military has drawn comparisons to biblical foes David and Goliath. - Macfarlane, 2018
...AND THEN ASSISTED HIM TO THE HOSPITAL WHEN HE WAS SHOT...
...EVADED ARREST WHEN SHE DISTRIBUTED LEAFLETS DESPITE A MILITARY CURFEW IN PLACE...
Why are you out!!?!
I am helping a pregnant lady
Fine. Hurry.
... DUE TO HER MOTHER'S DISAPPROVAL, SHE LIED TO ABOUT HER WHEREABOUTS TO ATTEND ANM MEETINGS.
Im going to a friend's.

With PFLP, Khaled:

- Persistently advocated for her capabilities to participate in guerilla warfare training.
- Persisted with her training in harsh climates on Jordan, Amman's mountains, despite Israel bombing their training grounds.
- Scoped out the grounds for missions like hijackings.
- Hijacked two planes, as a combatant of the "Che Guevara Commando Unit".
- Went on a tour across Middle Eastern countries to spread revolutionary messages.
- Worked as a hairdresser to raise funds for the PFLP.
- Spoke up for Women at United Nations.
- Worked to address women's rights.
- Engaged in political education.

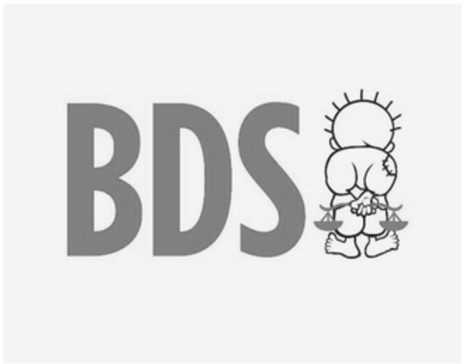
"A calculated tactic, airplane hijackings were the grand theatrical stunts which would attract attention to the Palestinian plight, open up the debate, and generate this new international understanding of the situation." - Sarah Irving

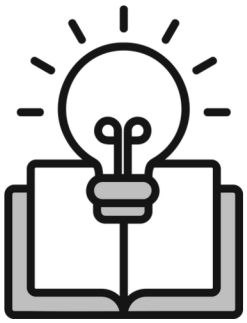
One of hijacked planes on Dawson's Field in Jordan, with hostages disembarking. (Getty Images)

What Can You Learn from Leila?

You have to be willing to sacrifice your comforts for liberation.

The fight for freedom will be inconvenient. It requires effort and intent.





Educate yourself! It is important to read books to learn about the revolutionary work of those who came before us, and to keep up-to-date with important news of the present day. Ignorance may be bliss, but knowledge is power.

All contributions to liberation movements are important. You may believe you need to be the loudest voice or have the strongest presence in a room if you want to make meaningful contributions in achieving freedom, but that is *not the case*. Fundraise, educate yourself and others, understand the needs of your community; not everything has to be flashy or make headlines to be impactful. Find your hairdresser shop and the hijackings will come.

Jamaica's Early History

The British captured Jamaica from Spain in 1655. By then, the Spanish nearly decimated the indigenous Taíno population through enslavement, disease, and murder. West Africans were then trafficked to the island. The word maroon comes from the Spanish, cimarrones, which means 'mountaineers.' The first Maroons were Taínos who had fled into the mountains, later joined by runaway enslaved Africans.

Did You Know?

Taíno society followed a matrilineal system!

Painting of Taíno women working their art (bagond.wordpress.com)

The British continued trafficking West Africans to work on the plantations. Many came from the Gold Coast, modern-day Ghana, a region which saw much warfare between the British and Africans during the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. Between 1680 and 1730, the way in which wars were conducted was radically transformed. Africans replaced hand-to-hand combat with musketry taken from the enemy in battle, and established militias recruited from the masses instead of using trained military units. Many of these warriors were among those trafficked to Jamaica.

By the 1680s, the Maroons in Jamaica had grown into two large communities — the Leeward Maroons, based in the central part of the island, and the Windward Maroons, based in the northeast parish of Portland.

Nanny of the Maroons

Queen Nanny as she appears on Jamaica's $500 bill.

Biography:

What we know about Nanny (c1680-1750) today comes from oral tradition. She arrived in Jamaica from the Gold coast with her sister Sekesu sometime during the 1690s. She fled to the mountains on arrival, while her sister remained enslaved. Maroon tradition holds that she came to the island as a free person, determined to find out what was happening to her people. Nanny was a skilled leader, spiritual healer, and military tactician.

The Maroons would camouflage themselves with foliage and ambush the British once they ventured into the mountains. Nanny became the leader of a Windward community in the Blue Mountains known as Nanny Town. She allegedly freed more than 800 enslaved people over 50 years.

One of her legendary powers was the ability to catch bullets.

Illustration of Queen Nanny Catching Bullet Mid Air, 2025 (@bodythudz_artisanworks)

Did You Know?

Nanny became the only Maroon and only woman to be named one of Jamaica's National Heroes in 1975 under the government of the late Prime Minister Michael Manley. She is pictured on the Jamaican $500 bill.

Contributions and Legacy

The First Maroon War between the Windward Maroons and the British began 1728. By 1740, the British offered to sign peace treaties with both communities. Cudjoe of the Leeward Maroons signed the first treaty with planter and militia leader John Guthrie. Oral history claims that Nanny refused to sign, because she knew the colonizers would not honour their part of the deal. The treaties reflected the power imbalance between the Maroons and the British in the latter's favour. One of the stipulations was that Maroons had to return runaways, something that Nanny refused to agree to. Despite her not signing the treaty, the colonial government deeded her 500 acres of land in Portland, where the Maroons built a new Nanny town, today called Moore Town. The Maroons continue to live independently on their land in Jamaica, although their sovereignty is threatened by mining and capital interests.

The success of the Maroons in fighting the British to a standstill was felt far and wide!

"in Jamaica there are in the mountains Blacks who have forced the English to make treaties with them. Well, I am Black like them. I know how to make war."

Toussaint L'Ouverture
creator of independent Haiti

Portrait of Toussaint Louverture
(Wikimedia Commons)

A Summary of Her Contributions and What You Can Learn From Nanny

- Her story is a clear example of ancient **female leadership**, one that disrupts patriarchal narratives. She had no children, but is considered the matriarch of all Jamaican Maroons.
- Her success came from her **resourcefulness**- her spirituality, knowledge of the terrain and plant life, and her ability to motivate, lead her people, outwit and out maneuver her enemy. Britain, with its weaponry and military might could not defeat them.
- The British were forced to offer a treaty to her people, even though she advised against signing. This shows that she had a **deep understanding of her enemy**, knowing they could not be trusted.
- Her refusal to sign the treaty was also based on the principle of **collective liberation**. She did not want to betray her enslaved brothers and sisters on the plantations in order to maintain her own freedom. The detrimental effects of those treaties meant the Maroons were mistrusted by Jamaicans for centuries.

Illustration of Nanny speaking to Maroons (Urban Intellectuals)

On the Black Liberation Movement

(in Northen Turtle Island aka North Amerika)

The 1960s in the United States was a time of intense social change. Following World War II, numerous countries abroad gained independence, while the civil rights movement at home was gaining momentum. In 1964, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated, and his successor Lyndon Johnson focused on Vietnam. Despite passing the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, Black Americans were still violently systematically persecuted in Amerika.

The Vietnamese genocide by Amerika resulted in a wave of young people, mainly those with BIPOC and queer identities, to become politically and socially active. This is similar to what we have seen happening since October 2023 with the genocide of Gazans.

Black Panther Party (BPP)

In 1966, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale founded the BPP for Self-Defense in Oakland, California, as a response to police violence.

The party advocated for armed self-defence under the Second Amendment, while implementing community programs like free breakfast, food distribution, and health clinics.

Panthers Serving Children Free Breakfast (Photo by Duchho Dennis)

On the Black Liberation Movement

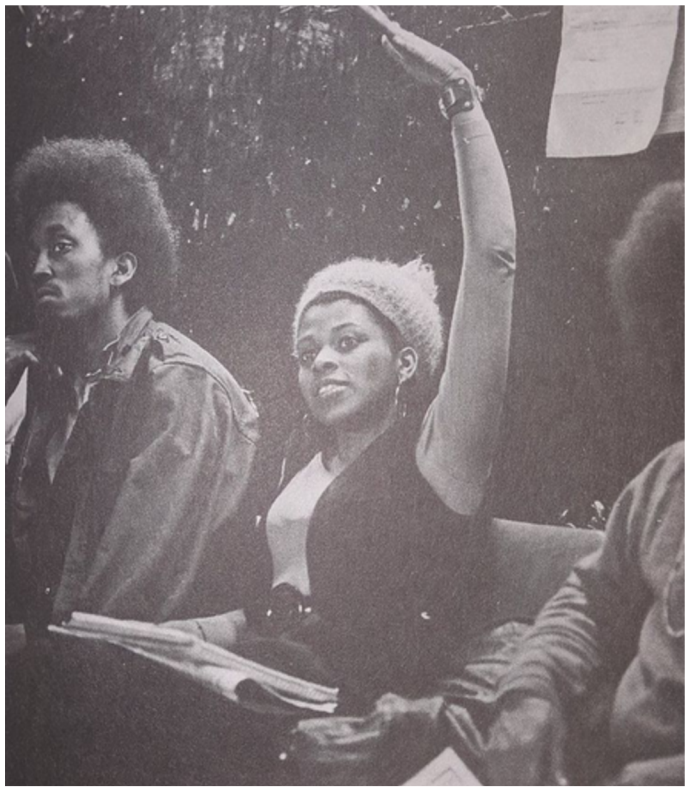
(in Northen Turtle Island aka North Amerika)

COINTELPRO

By 1969, the BPP's rapid growth caught the attention of the FBI, who used the **COINTELPRO program to disrupt the Black Liberation movement**. The FBI exploited rifts between members which drastically weakened the BPP. This led to the imprisonment of its leaders, including Newton and Seale, and the assassination of Fred Hampton. In 1969, the so-called **Panther 21** were wrongfully charged with plotting bomb attacks in New York City. They were acquitted but later expelled from the Party, as Newton was steering away from militant armed struggle.

Some of these members helped to start the Black Liberation Army (BLA), formerly the underground wing of the BPP.

A woman sits on a bench outside the Black Panther office in Harlem circa 1970 in New York City, NY. Pictured in the window are Panther founders Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale.
(MIchael Ochs Archives/Getty Images)



Assata Shakur, during a Black Panther Party political education session in Harlem.
(Look For Me In The Whirlwind)

Assata Shakur

Biography:

Assata Shakur was born in segregated North Carolina on July 16, 1947. Having been disillusioned by the "Amerikan dream" and menial office jobs from a young age, Assata returned to school in CCNY in California where she joined various liberation movements during the 1960s. As part of her activism, she studied guerilla warfare and softly practiced these teachings with weekly first aid training at Alcatraz, which was run by Richard Oakes from the Akwesasne nation and LaNada War Jack from the Bannock tribe. She joined the BPP in 1970 and then later went underground with the BLA.

"IT SEEMED LIKE PEOPLE WERE GOING UNDERGROUND LEFT AND RIGHT. POLICE REPRESSION CAME DOWN SO HARD ON THE BLACK MOVEMENT THAT IT SEEMED AS IF THE ENTIRE BLACK COMMUNITY WAS ON THE FBI'S MOST WANTED LIST."- ASSATA SHAKUR

In 1973 on the New Jersey Turnpike, Assata was shot and arrested on false allegations of killing a kop. Her comrade in the BLA, Zayd Shakur was murdered by kops that night. Assata's arrest is a prime example of the unjust judicial and prison system. Falsely accused, Shakur spent a majority of her 6 and a half years in prison in solitary confinement with her conditions being equivalent to torture. Her aunt, Evenlyn, worked on all her cases as the state unsuccessfully attempted to pin additional crimes on her. Assata's second lawyer, Stanley Cohen, was murdered after acquiring evidence that would acquit her in the New Jersey Turnpike charges. Assata escaped maximum security prison after 2 years. Today, she lives in Cuba with the FBI placing her as the first woman on the persons most wanted list.

Summary of Contributions

Assata was labelled by Amerikan media as the Mother of the BLA. While her role in the underground is remarkable, her love for liberation is her true legacy.

- Assata's **poetry** speaks on universal emotions. She combats her dehumanization through her writing.
- Assata has a **deep love and care for children**. During her early time in the BPP's breakfast program she offered children food to take home and spent any free time indulging in their curiosity. She was also a student-teacher for remedial children. She used this opportunity to decolonize the classroom.
- Assata played **crucial roles in her time underground**. She worked with network support stations to find safety for her comrades.

Illustration of Assata's escape from prison, 2025 (@bodythudz_artisanworks)

- Assata's story is filled with **political education**. She exposes the vile realities of Amerika. Her life is a breath of truth and defiance that guides the revolution's understanding of freedom.

What Can You Learn from Assata?

Remain in solidarity with other movements. This is a collective fight, and we need to support each other. We are not free until we all are.

View the underground and political organizing as a science. We must take observations of the past that lead to the failures and triumphs of movements and build on them.

There is a need for mass education, which includes acceptance of critique. Assata makes note to **educate, organize and mobilize**. In action, inevitably there will be mistakes, so develop the ability to take and provide respectful criticism in alignment with the collective's goals. Even Assata provided the Black Panther Party with her criticisms of lack of organization and sexism.

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE CHANGE

EDUCATE

Learn about revolutions and revolutionaries before you.
eg. zines, books, political education classes

Focus:

- *learning key concepts and ideologies*
- *how to create long-lasting and sustainable social change*

ORGANIZE

Understand the needs of your community. Work as a unit to fulfil those needs
e.g. mutual aid, helping neighbours , food drives

Focus:

- *building community, trust and respect*
- *having conversations and listening to others*
- *serving the most marginalized*

MOBILIZE

Connecting large groups of people, with predetermined actions, to achieve a goal.
e.g. protests, petitions, strikes

Focus:

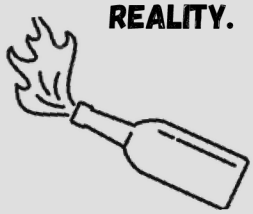
- *keeping people engaged and safe*
- *using momentum to effectively strategize and campaing*

The Fight for Queer Liberation in Post-Vietnam Amerika

The 1960s was a time of great civil unrest in Amerika. US participation in the Vietnam War served as a backdrop to the Black power movement, feminist movements, and the gay liberation movement. On June 28, 1969 New York City kops raided a gay bar and inn called Stonewall. Runaway Queer children met them with defiance, acting as a catalyst for the riot that followed. Marsha P. Johnson was the first person to fight back against the riot kops. The Gay Liberation Front (GLF) emerged as a result of this moment and was active between 1969-1973. Queer activists, then and now, echo their collective grief from the AIDs epidemic in their activism. The disease kills 100 000 US. citizens a year and marginally affects Queer people.

Founded by Jerry Hoose, The Gay Liberation Front was a collective of Queer freedom fighters like Marsha, who organized weekly marches, planned actions, organized mutual aid, and spoke up for gay rights across the world. Photo creds Diana Davies, circa 1969-1972

THOUGH RIOTS ARE OFTEN SPORADIC AND IMPULSIVE MOMENTS FOUGHT THROUGH MUCH RECKLESSNESS, WE SHOULD REMEMBER THAT THEY ARE CUMULATIVE OF A HISTORICAL REALITY.



With the global resurgence of right-wing governments, we are seeing the advancements made through decades of activism slowly being eroded, through dehumanizing policies against trans-people of all ages.

Marsha P. Johnson

Biography:

Marsha “Pay It No Mind” Johnson was born on August 24, 1945, in Elizabeth, New Jersey. Although she was assigned as a male at birth, Marsha knew her true self from a young age. She left an abusive home at 18 years old and survived by being a sex worker on Christopher Street, New York. Her legacy of selflessness led to her being the Queer community’s first patron saint, one of her many accomplished firsts.

Working as a Black transgender sex worker was extremely dangerous. Marsha was nearly killed many times and arrested over a hundred times. Her mental health suffered. During mental episodes, she’d offer her clothes to King Neptune for her friends and father “at the bottom of the NYC river”. Paramedics would institutionalize her when she was found walking naked.

HOSPITALIZATION FOR QUEER AND FEMME FOLKS OFTEN MEANT FORCED SHOCK TREATMENT AND MISDIAGNOSES.

“Trans Formation” illustration depicting Marsha and runaway Queer kids during the Stonewall Riots, 2025 (@bodythudz_artisanworks)

In 1972, Marsha quit her life as a sex worker and joined the Hot Peaches Theatre. Audiences were captivated by her “aura of generosity” and stage presence. This theatre “had anything go" and liberated Queer and trans folks to freely express themselves.

On July 6, 1992, Marsha’s body was found deceased in the NYC river. The kops labelled her death as a suicide but friends believe it was from assault or a possible episode. The walk to her burial site became a march of hundreds of people, symbolic of her power and love. She was laid to rest in the NYC river.

Summary of Contributions

- Marsha **paved the way for many of the rights Queer folks have today** through her work in the GLF and STAR
- Marsha **inspired Queer folks authentically and unapologetically be themselves** during a time of fear
- Marsha **housed and fed 24 homeless transgender youth** with her comrades in the STAR program
- Marsha **empowered racialized trans folks by leading the gay Pride march in 1978** when privileged white gay men tried to ban her group
- Marsha **actively cared for her friends with AIDS**. She prioritized nursing them through their finals days and vocally advocated for them on the streets.
- Marsha brightened the lives of many through her selflessness and kindness. **She would give the last of her food and money to other Queer houseless folks**.

Illustration of Marsha at StoneWall, 2025 (@bodythudz_artisanworks)

AT THE 1969 STONEWALL RIOTS, ONE WITNESS STATED MARSHA BEGAN THE RIOT BY THROWING A SHOT GLASS AT THE MIRROR PROCLAIMING "I GOT MY CIVIL RIGHTS!", ANOTHER CLAIMED SHE CLIMBED A LAMPPOST AND DROPPED A HEAVY PURSE ONTO A POLICE CAR WHICH SHATTERED THE WINDSHIELD.

What Can You Learn from Marsha?

Kindness, Generosity and Love to all

Marsha was kind and compassionate to everyone, even those who wished harm to her. She acted from a place of empathy because she didn't want people to struggle like she did. Her love brought substantial change to the lives of many.

Standing up for your rights

Marsha refused to be disempowered. She was fearless in the face of riot police and those oppressing her on the street. Always authentic, she walked with her head high, disregarding the misinformed and hateful society.

Organize on the streets

Marsha contributed to mutual aid and outreach, even when she had nothing to give. Her generosity bled into formal organizing, as she served the most vulnerable in society through marches, candle light vigils, and opening a homeless shelter.

In 1970, Marsha's comrade Sylvia Lee Rivera founded the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionary (STAR) organization. Initially, STAR housed 24 transgender youth in the back of an abandoned pickup truck. Eventually, a big-time mobster gave them a slum apartment. They also held an annual candlelight vigil honouring those who passed away from AIDS.

Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, ca. 1989-1990. (The Rudy Grillo Collection, Rudy Grillo / LGBT Community Center Archive.)

STAR Banner (Wikipedia)

Dictionary

Matrilineal: Kinship that is traced through a women's lineage, such as children taking their mother's last name.

Matriarchal: A social, political, and economic system where women are at the top of the hierarchy.

Puppet regime: When a government serves external interests instead of its own people.

Feminism: A social, political and economic movement with many different waves and sectors. We believe in intersectional feminism which aims to defeat patriarchy through a Marxist, anti-racist, decolonial, and trans-inclusive lens.

Nakba: An Arabic word for catastrophe.

Land back: Land back is a social and political movement that aims to reclaim Indigenous sovereignty and stewardship over Turtle Island.

Deify: To worship or to view someone as "Godly" (i.e. can do no wrong).

Community: In short, it is a group of people connected to each other based on proximity or specific shared characteristics.

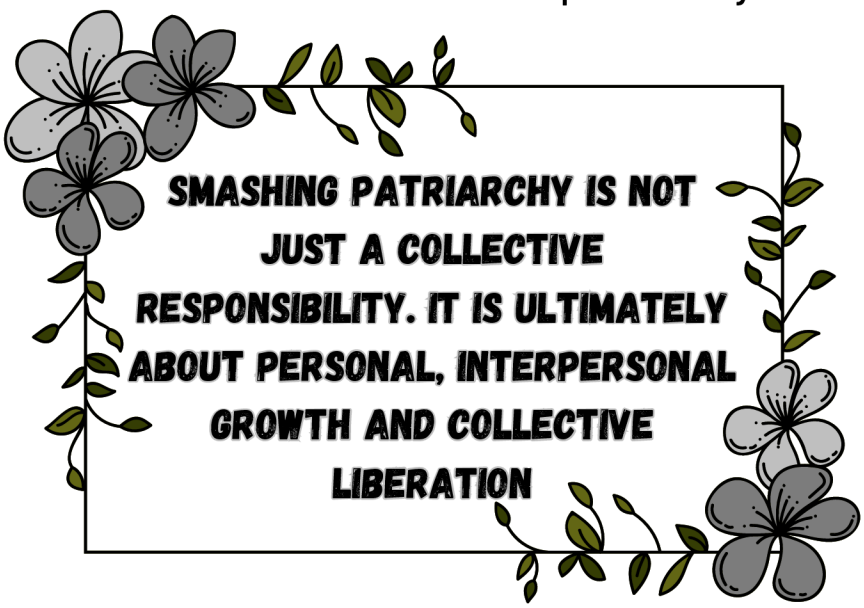
Oppressive: Infliction of unjust conditions onto minority groups.

Oppressed: Those subjected to unjust treatment by groups in power, typically having their human rights withheld or unmet.

Filial: In many cultures following Confucian tradition, children have a set of expected responsibilities and behaviours to follow according to their gender and age in the family. A child's devotion to their "role" measures their love and connection to their family and lineage.

Call to Action!

Patriarchy and misogyny are prominent in “progressive” spaces. Even though many of our male comrades believe in gender equality, they still benefit from male privilege and are reluctant to give it up. The most radical of feminists have had to deal with their own internalized misogyny. We invite you to take up the following calls to action to counter the patriarchy!


SMASHING PATRIARCHY IS NOT JUST A COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY. IT IS ULTIMATELY ABOUT PERSONAL, INTERPERSONAL GROWTH AND COLLECTIVE LIBERATION

1. Listen to women, take them seriously, and don’t talk over them.
2. Don’t objectify women.
3. Acknowledge that feminism is crucial to achieving collective revolutionary liberation.
4. Stop problematic and misogynistic behaviour, even when women are not around. You are no better than a misogynist if you do not engage in re-education, unlearning and accountability.
5. Refrain from blaming women for issues in communities, relationships, and personal lives and instead question why you may be quick to put all the blame on a woman.

Quiz

Assess Your Internalized Misogyny

Take this quiz and answer as honestly as possible. We have taken the EMERGE Internalized Misogyny Scale and adapted slightly for this discussion.

Each item is rated on a 5-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5(strongly agree).

Distrust of women

- ☐ 1. Women exaggerate problems they have in social spheres.
- ☐ 2. Women are too easily offended by comments me or other comrades make.
- ☐ 3. Women seek to overtake leadership positions from Men in order to have control over comrades.
- ☐ 4. When women are incorrect in a political/ educational setting, they typically complain about being discriminated against.

Devaluing of women

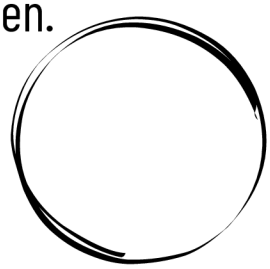
- ☐ 5. It is better for women to fill the roles of childcare and food handling in organizing spaces rather than frontline leadership.
- ☐ 6. I think that most women would lie just to get ahead, including being an informant to get money.
- ☐ 7. I am treated harshly or unfairly by women for no apparent reason.
- ☐ 8. I prefer to be in circles with more men than women.

Continue on next page.

Assess Your Internalized Misogyny

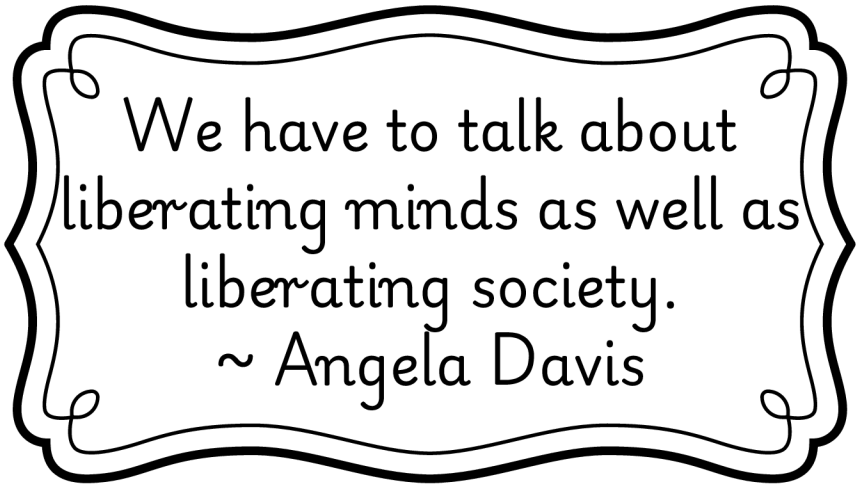
Valuing men over women

- ☐ 9. I tend to be less interested in a discussion when a woman dominates it for too long.
- ☐ 10. I am uncomfortable when I hear a woman speaking with a sense of authority on male dominated topics, such as armed resistance or political leadership.
- ☐ 11. I prefer to consume revolutionary works (podcasts, articles, books etc.) written about or by men rather than women.
- ☐ 12. The intellectual and physical leadership of a community/commune/cadre should be largely in the hands of men.
- ☐ 13. I prefer working with organizations that are managed by men.
- ☐ 14. If I were to receive an organizing role instead of a woman I would feel more satisfied than if I were to receive it instead of a man.
- ☐ 15. Generally, I prefer to work with men.

total score: 

Take a look at your score; the higher it is the more misogynistic you are. Whether your score is high or low there is work to be done. To counter your internalized misogyny, you must open discussions about how patriarchy manifests in our communities and why we must dismantle it, especially if you are a cis man.

Further Your Education



On Patriarchy/ Anti-Patriarchal Organizing

- Challenging patriarchy in political organizing, Article published on Colours of Resistance website by Harsha Walia https://www.coloursofresistance.org/731/challenging-patriarchy-in-political-organizing/
- A Guide for Organizing Defense against White Supremacist, Ahjamu Umi" pages 45-47

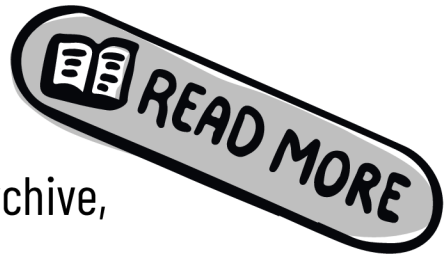
On Black Liberation Movement

- Assata: An Autobiography by Assata Shakur - can also be found in audio recordings from Pen and Paper: Library of a Pan African Communist
- An Open Letter From Assata Shakur by Ready for Revolution https://hoodcommunist.org/2024/03/07/an-open-letter-from-assata-shakur/

On Palestinian Liberation Movement

- My people shall live and Autobiography by Leila Khaled, edited by George Hajjar
- Leila Khaled: Icon of Palestinian Liberation by Sarah Irving - Biography
- Remembering Afro-Palestinian Freedom Fighter Fatima Bernawi Article by All African People's Revolutionary Party (AAPRP)

Further Your Education



On Vietmamese Liberation Movement

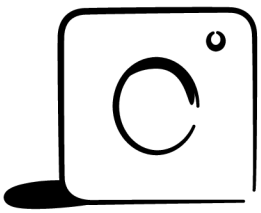
- The Black Panther, January 9, 1971, Roz Payne Sixties Archive, https://rozsixties.unl.edu/items/show/634
- Nữ tướng khăn rằn, Vietnamese Woman's Museum https://baotangphunu.org.vn/nu-tuong-khan-ran-vn-2/ (vietnamese)
- Nguyễn Thị Định: the General with the Khan Ran, Vietnamese Woman's Museum https://baotangphunu.org.vn/en/the-general-with-the-khan-ran/ (english)
- No Other Road to Take: Memoir of Mrs. Nguyễn Thị Định

On LGBTQIA+ Liberation Movement

- Life Story: Marsha P. Johnson - Women & the American Story https://wams.nyhistory.org/growth-and-turmoil/growing-tensions/marsha-p-johnson/
- Marsha P. Johnson | National Women's History Museum https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/marsha-p-johnson

On Jamaican Liberation Movement

- Nanny of the Maroons, The Jamaica Information Service https://jis.gov.jm/information/heroes/nanny-of-the-maroons/
- Enslaved | Peoples of the Historical Slave Trade: Stories, Nanny of the Maroons https://enslaved.org/fullStory/16-23-126814/
- Documentary: "Queen Nanny:Legendary Maroon Chieftainess" available on Kanopy through the Toronto Public Library



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"If *I* had a hammer...
I'd SMASH WHITE-SUPREMACIST CAPITALIST PATRIARCHY"